

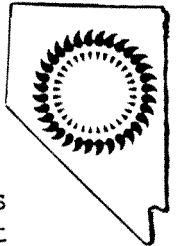
# NEVADA CLIMATE SUMMARY

## Office of the State Climatologist

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### SYNOPSIS

January was colder and drier than normal over most of the Silver State. Only small areas in the central portion of the State were a little warmer than normal, while only the extreme southern tip of Nevada had more than normal precipitation. In contrast to this wetness, most of Far Western Nevada had near record dry conditions, as January was the third driest first month in over 100 years of record.

Water Year precipitation: (Oct. 1990--Jan. 31, 1991) is less than 1/4 normal in the West and the South Central areas, with the wettest area being portions of the Upper Humboldt River, at a little over 3/4 of normal. Following on the heels of four previous dry years in most areas, with this 5th year the worst of the lot, there will be severe water shortages in many locations of State.

### TEMPERATURE

Temperatures were just a little below normal in all but the Central portion of the State, where Austin and Ely for example, averaged a little above normal, and the area from Mina to Fallon, and the Lower Humboldt River Area, where it was three to five degrees below normal for January. A portion of northern Elko County also had temperatures 3-4 degrees below normal for this usually coldest month of the year.

At mid-month temperatures rose to their highest levels with daytime highs in the 50's and 60's in the north, and into the 70's in the South (e.g. 74 at Amargosa Farms). On the other hand the mercury fell to -20 or below at several sites early in the month (e.g. -22 at Beowawe Gund Ranch, -21 at Wildhorse Reservoir and -20 at Pine Valley). This of course was a "heat wave" compared to the minus 40's of just a few days earlier in December, and the all-time State low of -50 in January 1937 at San Jacinto, where it was "only" -13 this month.

Water temperatures continued to fall in Lake Mead, being in the 54-52 degree range from the beginning to end of the month, while ice even covered shallow protected areas of Lake Tahoe.

### PRECIPITATION

The most notable precipitation event this month was the "lack of such an event" in the West. For one of the few times in recorded history, no big storms have been recorded to this point in the Water Year. In fact, January was virtually storm-free along the East Slopes of the Sierra Nevada in this normally

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wettest month of the year.

For example, in Reno only .01" of precipitation occurred, with a normal of 1.23". Only January's in 1872 (zero) and 1966 (Trace) were drier, with January 1948 also having .01". Records began in 1870. Conditions in the water producing Sierra Nevada were as bad, as only .30" fell at Truckee, California (normal is 6.55"), Tahoe City, California had .08" (normal 6.50"), Incline .06" (4.45" normal) and Glenbrook zero (3.47").

The most precipitation in the north fell in the Upper Humboldt Watershed, where Gibbs Ranch had 1.15" and Metropolis 1.06", both near normal for the month. It was also a good water month in the extreme northwest where Jim Fee had 1.63", along with 5 1/2" of snow, just across the California line at Ft. Bidwell in Surprise Valley.

Part of Southern Nevada received more than 3/4 of normal precipitation, as Kyle Canyon on Mt. Charleston had 1.45" and Searchlight 1.29" (170% of normal). Wettest honors go to Cottonwood Cove (below Searchlight) where 1.47" fell, with 1.04" on the 3rd, according to the Lake Mead National Recreation Area Ranger Glen Anderson.

Snowfall was a scarce commodity this month, as the Sierra Nevada, usually buried in the white stuff, got very little. The most reported in the State was 8" at Wildhorse Reservoir, 6 1/2" at nearby Jarbidge, and 6" at Unionville, Gerlach, and at Winnemucca Rinaudo.

#### SUNSHINE, WIND AND EVAPORATION

Sunshine hours were near or above normal in January, with Las Vegas having an unusually high 88% of the possible sun hours (normal = 77%). With a normal of 66%, Reno was at the other end of the scale.

Wind speeds averaged below normal this month, as no major storms developed. The highest gust reported was 56 mph on the 12th atop both 8400 foot Peavine and 9700 foot Slide Mountains near Reno.

Only 2 evaporation pans remained in use this month. Boulder City had an above normal 3.73" (normal 3.28") and Logandale 2.60".

NOTE: Distressed about the drought? How about this from the 1888 and 1889 Nevada Climate Report:

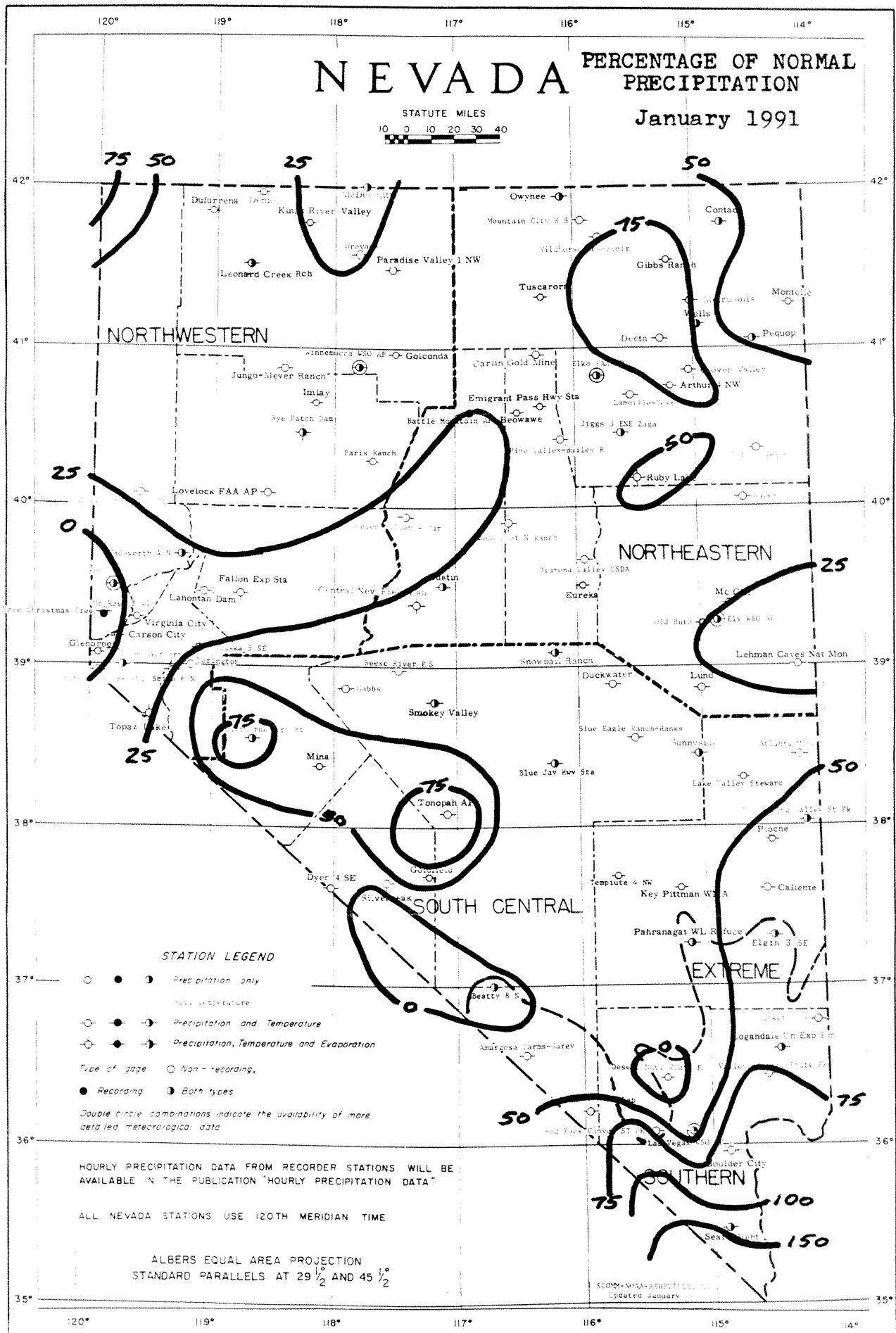
May 1888: "A great deficiency of precipitation in the last few months have caused agricultural and grazing interests to suffer heavy losses." It was reported in the Silver State Magazine that, "farmers discharged their laborers and abandoned hopes of raising any crops; the Humboldt River is a rivulet."

"December 1889 was an exceptional month as regards precipitation. Sierra Nevada Mountains had up to 26 feet of snow at Truckee--railroads blockaded. In Canyons of Ormsby, Lander and Humboldt Counties snow was reported from 20 to over 100 feet. Lake Tahoe rose 12" and with many feet of snow on surrounding mountains there will be a further rise when spring comes. Greatest amount of precipitation was 11.12 at Pioche. Greatest amount of snow was 81 inches for the month at Tuscarora--42 inches on ground December 31. The Rio Virgin River rose so high with rainfall of 4.35" that it changed its course and washed away everything in its path (bridges and dams)."

Tuscarora observer M.D. Brown noted, "Thousands of cattle will die in this storm, but the ranchers ar jubilant."

So there is hope. We just have to be patient!

John W. James  
State Climatologist



# NEVADA

## DEPARTURE OF MEAN TEMPERATURE FROM NORMAL

January 1991

STATUTE MILES  
10 0 10 20 30 40

